

11/18/2020

Dear Chair Wiggam, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee,-

Today, as a small business owner and a parent, I ask for your yes vote on Ohio Senate Bill 311.

When Governor DeWine and Dr. Acton first locked down the state, I was not personally fearful of Covid-19, but I understood both other's fear of the unknown, and the abundance of caution needed to ensure that the public remained safe as much as possible. At the time, little was publicly know about Covid-19. I supported initial closures to that extent.

I will spare you any scientific arguments that I believe I understand and believe are relevant to the topic of Covid-19. Not being a doctor or scientist, I'm sure they'd be dismissed anyway. But what's unarguable is the non-Covid-19 affect the Covid-19 response is – still – having on businesses and families. Allow me to explain.

The initial closures affected both my business life and my family life. My business saw a loss because many of my client's were closed, putting various projects and daily support on hold. My family life was affected because I immediately became my children's daily childcare provider, as their preschool was closed. I even had to construct an office in our garage so that my wife could practice her telemedicine from home without the kids interrupting and ensuring HIPAA privacy for her patients – a cost her employer will never reimburse, even though she has a perfectly good private office in her small office building.

However, we're most of a year past Governor DeWine's initial Emergency Declaration. There's Ohioans who are still unemployed – some still waiting on checks from the state, or ineligible for state assistance. There's businesses suffering – some who were never eligible for financial support.. There's businesses closed permanently. There's families who lost their life savings, their homes, or are now in massive debt. There's families who are still without childcare, forcing one parent to work nights and weekends, precluding them from being present in their children's lives. I could go on.

While, the Covid-19 death rate continues to remain low, causes of other deaths and health concerns continue to climb. The significant number of patients who delayed services because of their fear of Covid-19 (or were denied services, as it was some months ago), leading to increased death or condition complication in those cases, is still not fully recognized, but will be undeniably significant in the end. Furthermore, reports of increased suicide attempts and other mental health conditions continue to become more obvious. It's likely that the Covid-19 mitigation mandates are more detrimental to the health of our society than the virus itself.

Yet in the midst of all of the loss due to Covid-19 response, the Governor continues to double down on his flawed mandates. In recent days, he even appears to be posturing for new closures.

I urge you to vote yes for SB 311, to offer Ohioans some amount of oversight to the sweeping authority the Governor and Health Department have been abusing this year.

Sincerely, Robert Nelson Vance  
Galloway, Ohio